

THROUGH CENTRAL BORNEO

AN ACCOUNT OF TWO YEARS' TRAVEL IN THE
LAND OF THE HEAD-HUNTERS
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1913 AND 1917

i. e., Karl Sofus BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
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the species of pitcher-plants (*nepenthes*) are found here, the largest of which will hold two "quarts" of water.

The elephant, rhinoceros, tapir, wild cattle, and many other kinds of smaller animals of Asia are found in Borneo. No Indian tigers are in the country, though many varieties of the cat family are there, among them the beautiful large *felis nebulosa*. Wild pigs of many species roam the jungle in abundance. Several kinds of mammals are peculiar to the island, among which may be mentioned the long-nosed monkey (*nasalis larvatus*). There are over 550 species of birds, but the individuals of the species are not numerous; the pheasant family is especially gorgeous in form and colour. The rivers and the surrounding sea swarm with fish of many kinds, furnishing an abundance of food, although generally not very palatable. The djelavat, in flavour not unlike salmon, and the salap, both of which I met in the upper courses of the rivers Samba, Barito, and Mahakam, are notable exceptions.

The mineral resources of Borneo are very considerable; coal, gold, iron, diamonds, tin, and antimony are among the most valuable. Anthracite coal is not found in the country, that which is in evidence being from the tertiary period. Gold is everywhere, but thus far is not found in sufficient quantity to pay. Formerly the natives of the upper Kotawaringin district had to pay the Sultan gold as a tax. A mining engineer told me that in Martapura, the principal diamond-field, one may find gold, platinum, and diamonds while washing one pan.

The total population of the island is probably 3,000,-

make their boats. The trunk is very tall and much thicker near the ground.

Reaching a height of 500 metres, the ground began to be slippery with yellow mud, but the jungle impeded one less than the thickets around Lenox, Massachusetts, in the United States. Toward the south of our camp here, the hill had an incline of 45 degrees or less, and one hardwood tree that we felled travelled downward for a distance of 150 metres. A pleasant soft breeze blew for about ten minutes, for the first time on our journey, and the afternoon was wonderfully cool.

A Kayan messenger here arrived from the kampong, bringing a package which contained my mail, obligingly sent me by the controleur. The package made a profound impression on the Dayaks as well as on the Chinese interpreter, all of whom crowded around my tent to observe what would follow. I went elsewhere for a little while, but it was of no avail. They were waiting to see the contents, so I took my chair outside, opened and read my mail, closely watched all the time by a wondering crowd.

None of our attendant natives had been in this part of the country before except a Punan, now adopted into the Kayan tribe, who knew it long ago and his memory at times seemed dimmed. Fresh tracks of rhinoceros and bear were seen and tapirs are known to exist among these beautiful wooded hills. Chonggat succeeded in shooting an exceedingly rare squirrel with a large bushy tail. We finally made camp on top of a hill 674 metres in height which we called kampong Gunong.

may prove useful in case others are tempted to undertake journeys of exploration and research in the East Indies. To have the right kind of provisions is as important in the equatorial regions as in the arctic, and civilised humanity would be better off if there were a more general recognition of the fact that suitable food is the best medicine.

Our Dayaks from Apo Kayan, who had proved very satisfactory, left us at Long Pangian. They had to wait several days before their friends caught up with them, so they could continue their long journey. This party of Dayaks, after spending one month at home in gathering rubber, had travelled in five prahus, covered some distance on land by walking over the watershed, and then made five new prahus in which they had navigated the long distance to Tandjong Selor. Ten men had been able to make one prahu in four days, and these were solid good boats, not made of bark. Already these people had been three months on the road, and from here to their homes they estimated that at least one month would intervene, probably more.

The rubber which they had brought was sold for f. 2,500 to Hong Seng. They had also sold three rhinoceros horns, as well as stones from the gall-bladder and intestines of monkeys and the big porcupine, all valuable in the Chinese pharmacopœa. Each kilogram of rhino horn may fetch f. 140. These articles are dispensed for medical effect by scraping off a little, which is taken internally with water. On their return trip the Dayaks bring salt from the government's monopoly, gaudy cloths for the women, beads, ivory rings for bracelets and

stant occupation of the blians, however, is to cure disease which is caused by a malicious antoh longing to eat human blood and desiring to drive away the human soul. When hungry an antoh makes somebody ill. The blian's rites, songs, dances, and sacrifices aim to induce a good antoh to chase away or kill the evil one which has taken possession of the patient, and thus make an opportunity for the frightened soul to return, which restores the man to health. This, without undue generalisation, is a short summary of the religious ideas which I found on the Mahakam and in Southern Borneo, more especially those of the Penihing, Katingan, and Murung. Further details will be found among descriptions of the different tribes.

Shortly afterward we all made an excursion up the river as far as Batu Boa, which, as is often the case, contains a Dayak as well as a Malay kampong. At the first one, a forlorn and desolate looking place, the kapala, who had an unusually large goitre, told me that eighteen men had been engaged by the captain for his journey northward from there, which definitely precluded any prospect of ours for an overland expedition, even if under other conditions it would have been possible. As for the Malays, I found them rather distant, and was glad to return to Tumbang Marowei.

Here a singular sight met us in a sculptured representation of a rhinoceros with a man on his back, entirely composed of red rubber, standing on a float and surrounded by a number of blocks made of the same material. White and red pieces of cloth tied to upright saplings on the float added a certain gaiety to the scene.



THE BEATING OF GONGS FURNISHES THE MUSIC AT FESTIVALS. TUMBANG MAROWEI

From a kinematograph film



THE FEAST OF THE RUBBER GATHERERS. TUMBANG MAROWEI

The rhino and the rider are both made of rubber

From a kinematograph film

Some of the kampong people had just returned from a rubber expedition, and part of the output had been cleverly turned into plastics in this way.

The rhino was about seventy-five centimetres high, strong and burly looking, and the posture of the young man on his back conveyed a vivid suggestion of action. They were now on their way to sell this to some Chinaman. The image was said to be worth from two to three hundred florins, and as there was considerable additional rubber, perhaps all of it approached a value of a thousand florins. Bringing this rubber from up country had occupied eighteen days, and it was the result of ten men's work for two or three months. Twice before during the last two years rubber had been brought here in the same manner.

First they considered it essential to make a feast for the badak (the Malay name for rhinoceros). When going out on their expedition they had promised to make a badak effigy if they found much rubber. As the man on its back represented the owner, there was the risk that one of the souls of the latter might enter his image, resulting in illness for the owner, to avoid which a pig would have to be killed and various ceremonies performed.

The festival was scheduled to take place in three days, but it had to be postponed one day on account of difficulties in procuring the pig. I presented them with three tins of rice and another half full of sugar, which they wanted to mix with water to serve as drink because there was no rice brandy. It required some exertion to bring the heavy image from the float up to the open space in

front of the house where the rubber gatherers lived, but this had been done a day or two before the feast, the statue in the meantime having been covered with white cotton cloth. Several metres of the same material had also been raised on poles to form a half enclosure around the main object. The feast had many features in common with the one we had seen, as, for instance, dancing, and a good deal of Malay influence was evident in the clothing of the participants, also in the setting. Nevertheless, the ceremonies, which lasted only about two hours, were not devoid of interest.

The men, manifesting great spontaneity and enthusiasm, gathered quickly about and on the badak, and one of them took the rubber man by the hand. This was followed by pantomimic killing of the badak with a ceremonial spear as well as with parangs, which were struck against its neck. The man who was deputed to kill the pig with the spear missed the artery several times, and as blood was his first objective, he took no care to finish the unfortunate animal, which was still gasping fifteen minutes later.

An old woman then appeared on the scene who waved a bunch of five hens, to be sacrificed, whirling them over and among the performers who were then sitting or standing. The hens were killed in the usual way by cutting the artery of the neck, holding them until blood had been collected, and then leaving them to flap about on the ground until dead. Blood was now smeared on the foreheads of the principal participants, and a young woman danced a graceful solo.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PENYAHBONGS, MEN OF THE WOODS—RHINOCEROS
HUNTERS—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PENYAHBONGS
—EASY HOUSEKEEPING—DAILY LIFE—WOMAN'S LOT

THE Penyahbongs until lately were nomadic people, roaming about in the nearby Müller mountains, subsisting on wild sago and the chase and cultivating some tobacco. They lived in bark huts on the ground or in trees. Some eight years previous to my visit they were induced by the government to form kampongs and adopt agricultural pursuits, and while most of them appear to be in the western division, two kampongs were formed east of the mountains, the Sabaoi and the Tamaloë, with less than seventy inhabitants altogether. Tamaloë is the name of an antoh (spirit) who lived here in the distant past.

The kampong consists of four small, poorly built communal houses, and of the Malays who have settled here, in houses of their own making, the most important is Bangsul, who married a daughter of Pisha, the Penyahbong chief. Both before and since their transition to sedentary habits the Penyahbongs have been influenced by the Saputans, their nearest neighbours, four days' journey to the north, on the other side of the water-shed. Their ideas about rice culture and the superstitions and festivals attending it, come from the Saputans, of whom also a few live in Tamaloë. They have only recently learned to swim and many do not yet know how to paddle.

not seem to interfere with general health. Three of my Kayan carriers thus affected were more muscular and stronger than the rest. One of them was the humorous member of the party, always cutting capers and dancing. Women are less affected than men, and I often saw men with the disfiguring scaly disease whose wives were evidently perfectly free from it.

A party of six fine-looking Penyahbongs were here on a rhinoceros hunting expedition. They came from the western division, and as the rhino had been nearly exterminated in the mountain ranges west and northwest of Tamaloë, the hunters were going farther east. Such a party carries no provisions, eating sago and animals that they kill. Their weapons are sumpitans and parangs, and equipment for stamping sago forms part of their outfit. The rhino is approached stealthily and the large spear-point on one end of the sumpitan is thrust into its belly. Thus wounded it is quite possible, in the dense jungle, to keep in touch with it, and, according to trustworthy reports, one man alone is able in this way to kill a rhino. It is hunted for the horn, which Chinamen will buy.

At my request two of the hunters gave war-dances very well, taking turns. Their movements were graceful, and in the moonlight they appeared sinuous as serpents. The same dance obtains in all the tribes visited, and the movement is forward and back, or in a circle. It was performed by one man who in a preliminary way exercised the flexible muscles of the whole body, after which he drew his sword, seized the shield which was lying on

the ground and continued his dancing more vigorously, but with equal grace. Pisha, the chief, came to the dance, and the meeting with the new arrivals, though silent and undemonstrative, was decidedly affectionate, especially with one of them who was a near relative. Half embracing each other, they stood thus at least a minute.

The Penyahbongs have rather long legs, take long paces, putting down their heels first. They have great endurance and can walk in one day as far as a Malay can in three. In the mountains the cold weather prevented them from sleeping much. It often happened that they were without food for three days, when they would drink water and smoke tobacco. Trees are climbed in the jumping way described before, and without any mechanical aid. Formerly bathing was not customary. Excrements are left on the ground and not in the water. They don't like the colour red, but prefer black. Fire was made by flint and iron, which they procured from the Saputans.

The hair is not cut nor their teeth. The women wear around the head a ring of cloth inside of which are various odoriferous leaves and flowers of doubtful appreciation by civilised olfactory senses. A strong-smelling piece of skin from the civet cat is often attached to this head ornament, which is also favoured by natives on the Mahakam.

In regard to ear ornamentation the Penyahbongs are at least on a par with the most extreme fashions of the Dayaks. The men make three slits in the ear; in the upper part a wooden disk is enclosed, in the middle the

tusk of a large species of cat, and in the lobe, which is stretched very long, hangs a brass coil. The ears of the women have only two incisions, the one in the middle part being adorned with bead strings, while in the lobe up to one hundred tin rings may be seen. They are tatued, and noticeable on the men is a succession of stars across the chest, as if hanging on a thread which is lower in the middle. The stars symbolise the fruits of durian. The colour of the tatuing is obtained from damar.

Formerly they wore scanty garments of fibre, the man wearing only a loin cloth, and in case of cold weather a piece of the same material covered the shoulders and back. The woman had a short skirt folded together at the back, and both sexes used rattan caps. Besides sago their main subsistence was, and still is, all kinds of animals, including carnivorous, monkeys, bears, snakes, etc. The gall and urine bladder were universally thrown away, but at present these organs from bear and large snakes are sold to traders who dispose of them to Chinamen. Formerly these people had no salt.

No cooking utensils were employed. Sago was wrapped in leaves and placed on the fire, and the meat was roasted. There is no cooking separately for men and women, and meals are taken irregularly, but usually twice a day. The crocodile is not eaten, because it would make one mad, nor are domestic dogs or omen birds used for food. Honey is collected by cutting down the tree. Their principal weapon is the sumpitan, which, as usual, with a spear point lashed to one end, also serves as spear and is bought from the Saputans. Parang and shield

complete the man's outfit. On the Busang only ten ipoh (upas) trees are known from which poison may be obtained for the blow-pipe darts; to get a new supply a journey of two days down the river is necessary, and six for the return.

Except for a few cases of malaria, among the Penyahbongs there is no disease. In 1911 the cholera epidemic reached them, as well as the Saputans. Of remedies they have none. At the sight of either of the two species of venomous snakes of the king cobra family this native takes to his heels, and if bitten the wound is not treated with ipoh. Until recently they had no blians; there were, at this time, two in Tamaloë, one Saputan and one Malay, and the one in the other kampong learned his art from the Saputans. One man does not kill another, though he may kill a member of the Bukat tribe, neighbouring nomads who live in the northeast of the western division, in the mountains toward Sarawak. Suicide is unknown. It was asserted to me that the Penyahbongs do not steal nor lie, though I found the Saputans untrustworthy in these respects.

There is no marriage ceremony, but the young man must pay the parents of the bride one gong (f. 30), and if the girl is the daughter of a chief her price is six gongs. About half of the men select very youthful wives, from eight years up. There are boys of ten married to girls of a similar age. One boy of fourteen was married to a girl of twenty. Children of the chief being much sought, one of Pisha's daughters, twenty-three years old, had been disposed of when she was at her mother's breast,

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doubtedly would evoke lusty cries from a white child. Between the plunges, which are repeated at least three times, with his hand he strokes water from the little body which after a few seconds is dipped again. It seems almost cruel, but not a dissenting voice is heard. The bath over he takes the child into his arms, ascends the ladder of the river bank and carries it home as silent as when it went forth. Sometimes one may hear children cry from being cross, but as a rule they are charming.

Monkeys, including the orang-utan, are eaten, but not the crocodile nor the tiger-cat. In accordance with the prevailing Dayak custom men and women eat at the same time. If they choose, women may accompany fishing or hunting expeditions if not far away, but when the game is wild ox or rhinoceros they are not allowed to take part. When there is an overflow of the river one cannot go hunting, nor if one should fall at the start, nor if the rattan bag should drop when the man slings it on his back, or if anybody sneezes when about to leave the house. If when going out on an errand one stubs his toe against the threshold, he must wait an hour. Having started on a fishing or hunting expedition nobody is permitted to go back home; should this be done the enterprise would be a failure for the others; nor should the dogs, on a pig hunt, be called in while on a ladang lest monkeys and deer eat the paddi. When about to undertake a journey of more than four or five days' duration one must abstain from eating snake or turtle, and if a pregnant woman eats these reptiles the child will look like them. Should she eat fruit that has fallen to the ground, the child will be still-born. The same prohibition applies to lizards.

5. LEAVES THAT BAFFLED ANTOH

(From the Penyahbongs; kampong Tamaloë)

Two brothers were walking in the utan, with sumpitans, when they met a pig which one of them speared. The quarry became furious and attacked the other one, but they helped each other and killed the pig, ate what they wanted, and continued their hunting.

Next they met a rhino which they killed. As they began to take off the hide, cutting into his chest, the rhino became alive again, and the hide turned out to be the bark of a tree. The two ran home, but the rhino came after them, so they again had to flee, pursued by him, until they came across a small tree called mora, of which antoh is afraid. They gathered some of the leaves, and as soon as the rhino saw that he ran away.

6. PENGANUN, THE HUGE SERPENT

(From the Penyahbongs; kampong Tamaloë)

The mother of Daring's wife ordered him to go out and hunt for animals to eat, but said they would have to be without bones. He searched for a month, and all that he got had bones. Finally he brought back a leech, which she ate. Then she said: "Go and look for penganun," the huge serpent with the golden horn. He met the monster and used all his poisoned darts before it succumbed. He left it there and went home. "Have you got the big serpent?" she asked him. "Yes!" he answered. She then went out to bring it in, but she cut off only a little of the flesh, which she brought back. It was cooked in bamboo, and the people in the house ate